

The Forest

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Category: Harry Potter

Genre: Adventure, Supernatural

Language: English

Characters: Draco M., Ginny W.

Status: Completed

Published: 2016-04-11 17:11:17

Updated: 2016-04-11 17:11:17

Packaged: 2016-04-27 19:50:22

Rating: K+

Chapters: 1

Words: 9,750

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: The game was on. Without a wand and without a clue as to her whereabouts, Ginny figured that this would be where she met her end. But she's not the only player in this game. And this forest isn't what she expected.

The Forest

Written for **OWL Flying** (Write a story with in the genre supernatural, using the given list of prompts.)

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-oOo-

The very trees seemed to have had it out for her. With every step, the lush green foliage looked to swallow her. She continued moving through the trees, sure by the sun she was heading south. Or she kept telling herself that. In all truth, she didn't know which way was up at this point. She just kept running. Running and watching the trees dance in that sickening manner as they looked upon her with a mischievous and malicious intent. Fear and worry coursed through her body as she picked her way through the tree line.

Ginny was beginning to grow tired. There was something in the air that was making it hard to breath. Something that was making her veins feel cold. Her legs strained from the purpose of keeping her going. She knew stopping wasn't an option. She stopped moving, they gained ground. That distance between her and the pack was the only thing keeping her alive at this point.

Exhaustion continued to threaten her. There was no doubt in her mind that this was where she was going to die. Wandless, lost and falling short on adrenaline by the minute, Ginny didn't expect to make it out of this alive.

The rustle of leaves to her left caused her to still. This forest was often too quiet. In the hours she had been running, she had seldom heard sign of life. So such a heavy rustling sent chills down her spine. She took a step back, kneeling down to grab a fallen stick. Her fingers set around the chipping wood, eyes set to the swaying line of bushes. She was going to die in this forest. That had been made plainly clear to her. But if she was going out, she was going out fighting.

Rising slowly, she waited for what she expected to be the pack to slink their way out from the bushes. It wasn't though. Eight legs the size of her arms, and too many eyes than she'd ever be able to count — the spider in size was the length of her torso. It lunged for her, a snarl on its mouth.

Swinging the stick, Ginny heard a pair of crunches. One was the spider crumbling. The other was her weapon. The stick had snapped, a jagged section imbedded into the creature. She grinned, spitting at the stumbling monster. She stepped forward, kicking it roughly where it bled. The spider snarled. Its attempt to fight back was met with a boot to the face. Ginny slammed her boot into it until it stilled. She kept kicking even after that. Finally stepping away from the best, she didn't know if she wanted to scream in triumph or vomit at the way one of its legs continued to twitch even after death.

The rustling began anew behind her. Steading herself, Ginny waited for what was to come. She could handle a second spider. Unfortunately for her, it wasn't just one. At least a dozen of those spiders started pulling themselves over the bushes and down from the trees. They were huge, a few bigger than even she was.

One took the advance, scrambling towards her in a mad dash. Before she could react, it was on her, hairy legs tearing away at her shirt as it tried to snap at her neck. She screamed, shoving the stick into the creature's side. It howled in pain, and shoved it away.

A curse slipping from her lips, Ginny clawed her way onto her feet and ran. Her blood was coursing through her ears. That Gryffindor pride screamed that this was simply cowardice. All she had done since being dropped into this forest was run. Run and hide. She'd gotten pretty good at it.

Chest growing tight and legs burning from strain, she knew she couldn't keep running. The acromantula were gaining ground. They were faster, stronger, and had the advantage.

Foot catching on an uprooted branch, Ginny went down. Rolling onto her back, she grabbed a large stone and chucked it at a jumping spider. It landed harshly upon impact, the stone crushing a leg. The other spiders slowed, hovering above her in the trees and inching forward among the grass. She could see the hunger in their eyes. Her choices in weapons were low, a few stones and a cracked branch. She craved to have her wand.

One of the spiders advanced forward. Its pincers clicked together, drool flowing onto the fallen leaf. She had run. She had fought. And this was where Ginny Weasley knew she would die.

Watching the advancing spider, she slowly reached for another

stone.

"Incendio!"

She heard the voice just before a stream of fire shot over her head. It collided with the advancing spider. The creature screamed, falling over itself to run. A second fire began, growing in height and heat between her and the monsters.

Ginny watched as the creatures fled. She shifted, turning from where she still sat on the ground to look at the man who had saved her. Her body tensed when she recognized him. His jacket was ripped, his pants ragged and his shirt caked in mud. Blood had dried against the soft white skin of his forehead. Cuts and bruises marked much of his body. There was a rough blonde stubble along his jaw. His hair was wild, a few strands flying out from where he had tied it in a short bundle. There was something savage in his eyes.

Ginny scrambled up, grabbing the stone. Poised for defense, she watched as the man held up his hands. She noticed he didn't have a wand.

"Calm there, Weaslette," he spoke slowly. "I'm not going to hurt you."

"You expect me to believe you?" She asked, drawing the stone back in preparation to throw. "You're a Death Eater. How do I know you're not with Greyback and his pack?"

"Do I look like I'm with those bastards?" There was almost a tone of offense in his voice. The screams of the spiders grew in rage. The two of them broke eye contact long enough to see a few of the monsters starting to climb the trees.

"I suggest we find somewhere else to have this conversation, Red," Draco prompted.

Ginny knew he was right. Knowing that was safer than the army of hungry spiders, she took her chance on Malfoy. Dropping the rock, she sprinted towards him.

"I'm trusting you here," she hissed as they dashed from the area, "don't make me regret this."

He muttered something under his breath, but she didn't bother figuring out what. They traveled in silence until he brought her up to a clearing. A small cave opening jutted out from under a grassy hill. He motioned for her to follow. Against her best instincts, she did.

"It's not much," he said once they stepped into the crevice. He sparked a fire using the earlier spell. It lit a small bundle of sticks, giving just enough light for them to see one another. "But it's as safe as any place to call the night."

Ginny looked away from him and the fire, and out the cave opening. It had grown darker in the last few hours. Night was on its way.

"What are you even doing out here?" Ginny asked.

"Probably the same thing you are," he answered. "Fighting for my life."

Looking at him closer, Ginny saw the scars. There was a set that ran down his lower jaw and throat in a manner that reminded her of her Bill's scars. He was slipping off his jacket, and Ginny saw those scars as well. They weren't as thick as the ones on his neck, but they were pretty rough. He held his jacket out to her, and she grimaced at what she saw. The dark burns that marred his Dark Mark were the most notable. She could barely make out the black ink through the scars. It looked painful. Like the flames had bite him.

"Take it," he spoke, shacking the jacket. "Cover yourself up."

Ginny looked down at herself, finally realizing the damage the spider had done. Her shirt was ripped down the front, and had several tears along the side. It was hanging in rags, thin scratches showing along her torso and breast. One of her bra straps had been cut, and the top of one of the cups ripped.

"Thanks," she took the jacket, spilling it over her shoulders. Zipping it, she was thankful for the warmth. "You don't need this?"

Draco was already sitting by the fire, holding his hands to it. "I don't get cold easily. And you need the protection. Fire is warm by the way. You don't have to stay fifty paces away."

Ginny grinned despite herself and joined him, enjoying the warmth. It had been so long since she'd felt it.

"You didn't answer my earlier question." Ginny lifted her gaze onto him, watching every twitch he made. "What are you doing out here? How did you find me? Why did you help me? Where's your wand? How do you do those spells without a wand?"

Draco chuckled. "Do you always ask so many questions?"

"Only when I need to know the answers."

He considered for a moment, pocking around at the fire with a stick. "Wand is back at the Manor. I didn't have it on me when they locked me up. As far as I know it's still there."

"Who locked you up?"

"Death Eaters."

"Why?"

Draco kept his eyes lowered. The soft light of the fire made his features look so youthful. He looked so much younger than he was in that moment. "I wasn't careful. I had managed two, almost three years of slipping information but I got careless. Reacted too quickly. I didn't set up the proper precautions and they found out."

"You've been spilling information?" Ginny looked him over. "You've been our spy?"

"Not who you expected, huh Weaslette."

She forward. "Still doesn't explain why you're out here."

"Killing me would have been too easy I guess," he shrugged. "They gave me to Greyback. Gave him free run to do as he pleased."

Draco paused in that moment, reaching up and tugging the collar of his shirt down. She saw the poorly healed bite marks along his shoulder. "Sunk his teeth right into me. After he had his fun that is. I've been sitting in a cell somewhere ever sense. Until, about two days ago when they dropped me out here. There's a full moon coming up. Said this was my opportunity. I survive out here. I pass their test. I make the kill and I'm part of the pack. I didn't know what they meant until I saw you."

"Kill me?" Ginny breathed out. "Would you?"

Draco looked directly at her. That animalistic shine in his eyes caught in the fire light. "Believe me, if I had planned on killing you, I would have just left you to the spiders."

That didn't make her feel any better.

"What are you doing out here?"

She drug her foot across the floor, drawing her knees against her chest. "You're not the only one who got sloppy. I was running a recon when I got an owl telling me that our spy â€" you I guess â€" was in the area and needed help. Didn't think anything of it. So I showed up, ready to help when I got jumped. Woke up in a cell. They were looking for information. Once they figured I wasn't giving any out, they dropped me out here. Said I had until the full moon to find me way out. Lucky I found you."

Draco smirked, "I think you're one of the few people of the world actually pleased to be in my company."

"You've apparently been risking your life to help us for years. And you saved me. When we get out of here, when we get back to headquarters, I'll make sure everyone knows. I got you on this."

The fire was beginning to die down. Draco muttered the spell, assisting the flames in rising. A faint scuffle came from the far distance of the cave. They paused to look, but it quieted.

Ginny watched, narrowing her eyes. "You still didn't answer one question. How did you manage wandless?"

"You won't always have a wand. Current situation as example. It's best to have a backup plan. Unfortunately, I can't do much past an Incendio and a basic stunner. But it's better than nothing."

She nodded in agreement. "So what's the plan to get out of here? Just wander until we find civilization?"

"Pretty much. There's got to be a town or something near by. We can find help there. Either someone who will lend us a wand for a moment or maybe you could try one of those Muggle telefoams or something."

Ginny smiled at his pronunciation. "Telephone."

"Whatever," he shrugged. "But once we get an idea of where we are, we can try to apparate somewhere. I don't want to take the risk of doing it in here. Especially without a wand on hand and we don't know what wards Greyback might have set up to keep us here. The last thing either of us needs to do is get badly splinched in the process."

"Sounds reasonable. What about climbing a tree? Getting an overhead look at where we are."

"Already tried. There's this fog set over the place. It's impossible to tell where the forest ends."

Ginny kicked at a twig which had fallen from the flames. "What about a Patronus?"

Draco shook his head, listening in on the soft rustling in the distance. It didn't seem to be affecting them yet, but he didn't want to take any chances. "Haven't tried. I've never gotten the hang of it. What use would that be?"

"We can send messages with it. I've done it before. Just haven't tried doing it without a wand yet."

"It's worth a try."

Ginny nodded, setting her back straight. She'd done this spell often enough, but never to this extreme. Never when she was wandless, hungry, and fighting against a forest that seemed to be siphoning off her magic. Taking her focus off the current situation she focused on something happier. She focused on her family who she imagined was worried sick about her.

It took a couple attempts of muttering the incantation for the small wispy of blue white to appear. It wasn't much, but it was a start. She tried again, not getting much further.

"One more time," she said, readjusting herself.

The scuffling at the back of the cave grew in intensity. There was a shrill scream. The pair froze, eyes slowly shifting into the darkness.

"What was that?" Ginny asked, keeping her gaze on the black.

A mass of brilliant blue cut off any response. At once, a swarm of pixies flew from the darkness, clawing and digging at them as they advanced from the cave. Ginny pulled into herself, hoping to protect her skin from the frazzled creatures. As soon as it started, the pixies were gone.

She waited an extra second before lifting her face from her arms. She could feel the slow dribbles of blood coming from the scratches on her face.

"What was that?" Draco growled, whipping the blood from his face.

"Damn pixies," Ginny hissed. "Do they normally just freak like that?"

"Not that I know of. Something must have startled them."

That something, Ginny figured, was probably the set of red eyes which quickly morphed though from dark. They pulsed vibrantly. A rough growl matched them.

She reached across the fire, grabbing Draco's arm and pulling him to his feet. He didn't fight her, scrambling up quickly and shoving her from the mouth of the cave. They tumbled onto the forest floor. The pixies took their presence and lashed out. Backing out of the fray, Ginny lost the ability to breathe when the beast sprung from the cave. Thankfully for them, its focus went immediately to the pixies.

Draco was holding her hand, moving her back with him. She didn't need to be told to leave. Using the distraction, they quickly left the clearing. The growls of the dog and the screams of the pixies grew quieter as they moved quickly.

"Hell hound," Ginny spoke once they were clear away. Draco looked at her, a desire for an explanation in his eyes. "The dog thing. We learned about them in Care of Magical Creatures. Massive monsters, named such cause people associate them with the Devil and all that fire and brimstone stuff."

"Right," Draco muttered, his eyes scanning the forest. It was getting dark. "We should find a place to camp. Preferably somewhere safe."

"Preferably."

They continued a bit longer, neither really speaking. It took them only a few minutes before finding a shallow cave, which after a little searching, proved empty. Draco didn't even bother starting a fire, just threw himself into the dirt and rolled his back against the wall.

Ginny did the same on an opposite wall. She lay there, watching as he fidgeted.

"Would you like your jacket back?"

Draco opened his eyes, cold grey shinning against his pale skin. "I'm fine. You need it more."

He closed his eyes, signaling that he was done with the conversation. Ginny sat up, finding that she couldn't sleep after the previous terror. "Hell hounds don't usually just roam forests."

Draco groaned when he realized she wasn't going to sleep. He sat up, leveling a gaze onto her. "What?"

"Hell hounds. They're not usually forest roamers. More to the mountains and volcanic islands."

"I don't know," Draco answered with a shrugged.

"Does this place feel strange to you? Like you're in the middle of a storm or something. Like something seems off."

"I don't know Weaslette," Draco muttered. "There's nothing we could do about it anyway. Just go to sleep will you."

She frowned at him, but as he dropped back into the dirt, she knew the conversation was over. Drawing the jacket close to her, she lay down as well and closed her eyes. The exhaustion she'd been feeling finally took hold. No sooner than her eyes were close, Ginny was asleep.

No sooner than she was asleep, Draco was shaking her awake. Cracking her eyes open, she glared at him and the morning sun.

"It's time to move," he ordered, tugging at her arm.

Ginny pulled away, curling back up and closing her eyes. "A few more minutes."

"No. We don't have a few minutes. The longer we wait, the greater danger we're in. This place isn't exactly visitor friendly."

Ginny growled, drawing herself from the ground. Brushing herself off, she smirked at Draco, who merely rolled his eyes and started walking off. She huffed, and made to follow him. The sun was rising in the distance. She watched, mesmerized as these little balls of golden light appeared in the trees. They were absolutely beautiful. They moved about, and as they passed over, the birds and flowers seemed to wake at their touch.

"Do you see that?" Draco asked, eyes following one of the balls.

"Ya." Ginny walked forward, reaching her hand out towards one. It shifted back and raced out of sight. The others followed. Every little golden light vanished. It was just another aspect of this forest that she didn't understand.

"Where to now, Great Forest Walker?"

He sent her a soft glare, but kept walking.

"Not much of a talker in the morning are you?" Ginny didn't expect him to respond. They fell back into silence, the growl of their stomach the only communication. The last time she'd eaten was so long ago. Judging from the way Draco was holding his stomach, it was clear he was suffering the same problem.

It was pure luck, or some Godly intervention, that they wandered into the lake only an hour after starting. The water glistened under the early morning sun. Bright green foliage surrounded them. Everything was so much brighter and more welcoming than the rest of the forest.

"We can rest here," Draco spoke, wandering a bit to the left. She followed his movements. Spotting the berry bush he was heading towards, she practically started salivating. He plucked a couple handfuls from the branches. Slipping her a share, Ginny had to

restrain herself from shoving them all into her face. They sat by the pool of water, plucking a few more berries off the branches and enjoying them.

There was a moment of peace that Ginny hadn't been able to enjoy in a while. A rustle across the pond caused them both to grow still. Considering the monsters they had encountered since arriving in this forest, it was no doubt that they were concerned.

The small thestral who wobbled from the bushes brought a smile to Ginny's lips. It was only about the height of her waist. Its skeletal body was long and gaunt. A shine was in its black eyes as it turned a hauntingly reptilian face towards the pool of water. Its leathery wings beat against the air before folding back in place. Following behind, was a small herd of maybe a dozen others of its kind. They settled themselves at the edge of the lake, lapping at the water. A few younger ones pranced about playfully. They were so graceful. So beautiful in a depressing and ghastly way.

She glanced to her side, taking in Draco's expression. He stared at them, a sad tint to his eyes. Ginny glanced back at the horse, watching as they roamed about.

"I've always loved horses," she spoke, popping a few berries into her mouth.

"Not me," Draco responded. "Never was a fan really."

"Any reason?"

Draco bit his lower lip, pondering if he really wanted this conversation. He figured that they had nothing better to do. "My mother loves horses. She kept a couple when I was growing up. She really loved to ride and wanted to teach me. I never really took to them though. It was always just too rough when riding. Too jerky. But she loved to ride, and I liked spending time with her. So I let her teach me. Ended up getting bucked off one when I was eight."

He reached down, rolling up his pants leg to show her the faded scar which wrapped around his ankle. "I broke my ankle. Snapped a bone right through the skin. Never got on a horse again. Never went near one. I've never been a fan of something that could kill me should it wish to."

Ginny smiled at that. "I always wanted a horse growing up. My mother asked where I was going to keep it since I couldn't fit it in my room. There was enough field, I always told her, to build a stable. She said between my brothers and the chickens, there was enough animals running amok, she didn't need to add a horse into the mix. So I improvised. I took in a chicken."

"A chicken?"

"Oh ya," Ginny answered. "They aren't usually pets, but I had one that I loved. Giddens. Sweet little thing. She used to follow me around during feeds. Once followed me from the coup and into the house. I kept her in my room for two days, feeding and taking care of her before anyone realized. My brothers thought I was mad. But I loved that chicken. All the way up until the end. Poor thing. She stopped laying eggs and my mother wanted to make a pot pie."

It took Draco a second before he made the connection. "That's rough."

"Tell me about it," Ginny grinned, shoving the rest of the berries into her mouth. "She didn't realize what she had done and I didn't realize I had eaten Giddens until later that night. I learned the circle of life very quickly that day."

The pair chuckled despite themselves. A ripple in the water's surface caused the two to focus on it. They watches as a head began to rise from the water. It was only a few feet away from where a young thestral was prancing about in the water.

"I've never seen a merman this close before," Ginny said. The creature only had the upper portion of its head out of the water. It wasn't nearly as fishlike as she had expected. There was a heavy yellow coloring to its skin, and its eyes were slanted. Wet black hair floated around it.

"You can from the Slytherin commons," Draco said, watching the merman inch closer to the horses. A second, sharing the same coloring, appeared at his side. "There's all these windows and since the dorm is under the lake, you can look right in."

"I imagine that to be pretty cool."

"It is. You can see all kinds of fish and such that swim by. I've seen the giant squid before through the windows. It likes to swim loops when people notice it. But the most fascinating is when the merpeople swim up. They're different than the ones over there. Much more fish like. But they come up to the windows often. Amazing enough, they know modern British sign language."

"Seriously?"

"Oh ya," Draco nodded. "Someone taught them and they use it to talk to students now. Every Slytherin first is taught proper defensive spells and sign language."

Ginny turned her gaze onto the scene before them. The mermen were only a short ways from the thestrals, but the herd didn't seem to notice the pair. "What do you think they're doing?"

Ginny shrugged. In that instant, one of the merman leapt from the water. It grabbed a young thestral by the hind legs and dragged it into the water. The second merman went down with. The remaining members of the herd whined and bucked at the action. Leathery wings flapped angrily at the air. Several dashed to the edge, pawing around in search for their missing member.

Draco and Ginny scrambled away from the lake in fear of another attack. Their hearts were beating rapidly.

Draco was truly startled. "I've never seen the ones in the Great Lake do that."

"I didn't know merpeople ate meat." Ginny managed to speak as she rose shakenly.

Draco was getting to his feet as well. The horses were bucking up a storm. "We should go."

Ginny didn't need any extra prompting. She was already making to leave. The death of the baby thestral had put her in a sour mood and hours upon hours of wandering was driving her crazy. They barely made it an hour before stumbling into some wild animal. And it wasn't just animals that were causing her heart to beat rapidly. It was every little rustle of movement that turned out to just be the wind. Every time a tree swayed in the breeze, every time a leaf cracked under their heels, the pair froze as if expecting an ambush.

Ginny was practically stomping through the woods in anger by this point. It had been hours. She was hungry again, tired and all she wanted was to get back home. It wasn't too much to ask for.

"Are you sure we're even going in the right direction?" Ginny asked, shoving a bush aside so they could cut through. "I feel like we've been walking in circles."

"I'm doing the best I can," Draco grumbled in response. "It's not like I really know where I'm going either."

"So no plan."

Frowning at her, Draco shoved past. "We established this already."

She didn't like his tone one bit. They were already trapped in some demented forest, with no magic and no sense of direction, the last thing she wanted to add was his condescending attitude. Opening her mouth to tell him this, she found his hand blocking her words. He pulled her backwards, his back up against a tree. Muttering against his fingers, she tried to get him off.

"Quiet," he hissed. She felt his head jerk downwards, and she followed his line of vision. Small creatures were scurrying along the ground past them at a rapid pace.

"I can barely smell 'em."

Ginny felt her spine grow ridged at the voice. Draco's hand grew tighter around her jaw as he too froze. The voice was coming just a bit away, passing behind the tree they were hiding behind.

"Too many other smells."

"Figures." A second voice cut in. Ginny didn't know who the voice belonged to, but she recognized it anyways. She had heard it enough times when they had held her.

"What do you think, Fenrir? Keep going or double back?"

"Keep going. They've got to be here somewhere."

"You think the brat's gunna do it? Kill the little bitch?"

"Don't expect him too. But you never know with a Malfoy and they're desire to live."

Ginny could make out the group from the side of her vision as they walked past. They were kicking down the foliage in their way, and stomping at any creature that found itself under their foot. She could still hear them even after they were out of sight.

"We need to go now," Draco said, already pulling her around the tree.

She wiggled free of his hold. "You don't have to keep telling me that. If we follow the way they came, it might lead us to an exit."

"Or a waiting group of Death Eaters."

"In which case someone has a wand and we get our hands on it. Unless you prefer wandering aimlessly. But I should remind you the full moon's tonight and I don't want to be here for that."

Draco narrowed his eyes, but couldn't fault her the argument. They picked their way through the destruction the wolves had left. It proved all too easy as the pack hadn't taken any consideration for the forest they were passing through. Small trees were uprooted, flowers trampled on, and what was left of some creatures littered the ground.

"They're so sick," Ginny hissed, stepping over the stomped body of a rabbit.

"They're monsters," Draco muttered. "Simple as that. It's just their nature."

Ginny looked sideways at him, once more taking note of the scars that ran along his jaw and throat. And then there was the bite mark he had shown her. That sharp shine in his eyes appeared once more and she didn't press. Instead, she turned her attention onto the remaining creatures of the forest. There were a few of those golden lights moving through the trees above them. Among them were some wispy forms that she thought were some form of spirits.

"It's nice to see something that doesn't want to kill us," she pointed towards the creatures.

Draco nodded, still picking his way through the path. "Always approve of that."

Ginny kept her eye on them, admiring the pure beauty of them. In a forest looking to kill them, she appreciated something lighter.

The lights blinked out once more. The wispy forms faded away. Silence hit every creature in the area. A sense of dread hit her spine.

The growl coming from behind them was a good indicator as to why the creatures fled. Turning slowly, she stared in horror as the red eyed monster. In the morning light she could see the beast much better than the night before. It was huge, so much bigger than a dog. The black fur on its body glistened as if wet. Pulsing red eyes narrowed onto them. Droll dripped from its muzzle.

"You think we can run?" Draco whispered.

The beast took a step forward, its gaze on Draco. "Might be a good time for that little fire spell of yours."

Draco nodded, twisting his hand in the proper movement. "Incendio!"

The fire erupted on the dog's hind leg. The beast roared in anger, but seemed otherwise unaffected by the fact that half of it was on fire.

"Hell hound," Draco groaned, "likes fire."

The hound leapt forward. It crashed into Draco, pinning the man down into the grass. The fire on its hind leg continued burning, sparks falling off onto Draco's pants. He kicked out, trying to get free from the beast as it lowered its muzzle near his neck. Sticky droll fell over his face and neck. He had his hands matted in the creature's fur, trying desperately to push it away from him. He was screaming stunning spells, hoping something would spark and hit its mark.

Ginny moved quickly, picking up a thick stick and facing the monster. Tightening her grip, she swung, bashing it against the monster's thick skull. It turned its attention onto her, snarling in response. A small river of red appeared in the thick black fur.

Draco took the distraction, and picking up a large stone, slammed it against the creature's skull. Ginny swung again, hitting the same spot. The beast roared back, sliding off of Draco. Ginny swung again, crashing the stick against the monster again. The wood snapped, splintering into its muzzle.

She could feel the fear and adrenalin coursing through her body. She glanced at Draco who was already bleeding across his chest and arm. The hound had stopped being on fire and was bleeding, but still seemed ready to fight. She just had a broken stick to defend himself and a heat running through her veins.

Her eyes widened when she realized what the heat was. Taking a few quick breaths, she took that fire and directed it at the hound.

"Stupify!" She screamed as the hound lunged for her. She didn't really expect it to work, but she needed something. The hound stumbled back in its lung, the spell hitting it roughly in the shoulder. She smirked at the advantage they now had.

It only slowed the creature down. As it prepared to lung again, Ginny reached out, taking Draco's hand. He jerked at the motion, but quickly understood the meaning behind her eyes. He nodded, looking back at the beast.

She could feel his magic coursing through their hands. It beat like a heart against her wild fire. As the hound leapt towards them, they both sent out a stunner. The combined force crashed against the hound. The beast rolled back. It scrambled to its feet before fleeing the scene.

A yell of excitement left Ginny's lips as she threw herself at Draco. Hugging him tightly, she marveled at the little golden lights that

appeared in the trees above them again. Draco gave a hiss of pain, and she drew back. The blood on his shoulder and chest had stopped flowing, but the wounds still looked rough. His leg was badly bleeding and had slight burns from the Incendio gone wrong.

"Let's get you sitting down," she prompted, assisting in lowering him onto a fallen log. He grimaced at the motion, holding his shoulder as he sat.

"The bleedings stopped at least," Ginny said, checking over the injuries. "That's good. But I need to clean this."

"And how do you expect to do that?" He asked, hissing as her finger brushed over a claw mark. "I swear the next dog that scratches meâ€|"

He trailed off, face turning into a rough grimace. Ginny slid the jacket off her shoulders, and grabbed the end of her tattered t-shirt. She took it off.

"Woah," Draco stopped her as she started to pull the material off. "What are you doing?"

"I need to bind the wound," Ginny answered, holding the remains of the shirt.

Draco picked up his jacket, holding it out for her. She smirked, putting it back on to cover her exposed torso. "Such the gentleman. Now take the shirt off, and sit still so I can help."

The little balls of golden light danced around them as Ginny carefully wrapped the tattered remains of her shirt around his wounds. She started first on his leg wound, doing her best to stop the bleeding as she tied thick strips of material around it. Her fingers brushed against Greyback's bite mark on his shoulder and she shivered. The full moon was tonight. She pushed that thought off, working on fixing his current injuries. It wasn't the best job, but it provided enough protection. Draco slipped his shirt back on, thanking her.

"You're not going to bleed to death. We should probably get moving. It's probably about noon. We only have a few more hours left before night fall."

The golden lights moved down closer to them. The hovered just above them, getting close enough that Ginny could see little bodies in the lights.

"Fairies," Ginny grinned, finally realizing what they were.

"It's been years since I've seen one this close." Draco reached out a hand, allowing one of them to rest in his palm. A few took to his hair, nuzzling against the blonde locks.

"I'm going to try a Patronus again." Ginny joined him on the log. A few of the fairies landed in her hair. She could hear little giggles behind her ears.

Draco agreed. "It's the best plan we got so far."

Ginny steeled herself, watching the little balls of light. She thought on her Patronus, and everyone waiting for her. She pictured Harry, and Hermione, and her brothers and parents. She slipped her hand in Draco's, thinking of all he had done for them, and the comfort it was to not be alone. She thought about the safety of home and a warm bed and hot shower.

The Patronus was slow forming. When it began to appear the fairies floated around it. There was a soft giggle in the air as the Patronus formed. Before long, the cloud formed into shape. Standing before them was a horse who shook its mane. It looked at Ginny, nodded and dashed off into the treetops.

"How long till we hear something back?"

Ginny shrugged. "A few minutes. A few hours. Just depends on how far away they are. Shouldn't be too long though."

"We only have a few hours," Draco reminded her. "The full moons tonight and I doubt you'll want to be in the same area as me when it comes. We need a plan for that."

"We'll be somewhere safe before then," Ginny pressed, not wanting to think about what was to come.

"Safe isn't going to be that easy. I'll be wild. Dangerous. I can't run the risk of biting you or anyone else we might come across."

Ginny frowned at him. "So what? You want me to leave you in here for the night? With Greyback and his group. You want me to run?"

"We're tired. Hungry. My leg is killing me, I doubt I can walk for much longer. It's already far past morning. The moon will be here shortly and when it does, I won't be able to control myself. I could hurt you. I could kill you."

"Then we'll just have to get out of here and get you somewhere where you can't hurt anyone." Ginny patted his leg. "I'm not going to leave you. If I have to knock you out and drag you with me, I will. I don't leave my friends behind. Now don't argue with me."

She stood, motioning for him to do the same. When he stumbled slightly, she put herself under his arm and helped him steady. "We'll walk for as long as we can. If we get out, than that's an easy solution. If not, we'll deal. "

He didn't protest. They hobble down the path, the fairies still following them. They traveled the rest of the day, picking their way through the forest. Luck seemed to be on their side for they didn't encounter any threats.

Before she wanted though, the sun began to set. The day had gone by too quickly.

"This is where we split."

"I'm not leaving you," Ginny hissed. "We've gone over this."

He glanced down at her. "Not leaving. Just parting way for the time

being. I'll find somewhere to shell up. Somewhere to barricade myself for the duration of the moon. But you need to run. Go as far as you can. Find higher ground. Not just from me, but if Greyback is still out here he'll be hunting you too.

Ginny wanted to protest, but she knew he had a point. Nodding once, she slipped out from under him. "Stay safe. Please."

"You too."

"I'm sure my brothers are on their way already. We'll come find you. We'll both be alright." Ginny kissed his cheek, before turning. She climbed her way through the path. Every instinct told her to go back. To drag Draco with her despite the danger. She couldn't though.

A large oak she stumbled upon was her best chance. Grabbing a lower branch, she pulled herself up. All those years of her mother telling her not to climb trees had paid off. Before long she was among the top branches. The moonlight lite over the place. The forest spanned out far around her. She understood what he meant by the fog. It was impossible to see anything really.

A howl cutting into the night air sent a ripple of fear through her back. A second hit the air. And a third. And a fourth. The air rippled with the sounds of waking wolves. Ginny was thankful for the distance she had from the wolves, but she still worried about Draco. He was down there.

Lowering herself from the tops of the trees, she heard the howl of a nearby wolf. It was close by, a mass of dark white dashing through the trees. Ginny shifted in the tree, hoping to get a better look.

The wolf was beautiful. Its fur was a thick dark white. It was small in form " but still much larger than any common wolf. It looked around with soft grey eyes which Ginny recognized. It sniffed the air, growling in her direction.

For a moment Ginny worried he had found her in the tree. Her worry for her safety was quickly replaced with worry for his when a giant dark grey wolf shot from beneath her. The wolf collided with Draco, teeth snapping and howls hitting the air. They tumbled. A yelp of pain nearly caused Ginny to slip on her branch.

The pack surrounded the fighting wolves but didn't intervene. Two of them sniffed the air, catching her scent. They growled, and turned their attention onto her. She was thankful wolves couldn't climb trees but they kept trying.

The other two wolves made to join Greyback in his hunt. The three pounced on the smaller one. Draco gave another howl of pain as a set of teeth embedded themselves into his leg.

Knowing that she couldn't just wait up here, she slide carefully across a thick branch. Keeping a hold of an upper branch she didn't fall out, Ginny leveled her hand towards the wolf. She screamed a stunner. It merely bounced off one of the wolves. She was too far away. Didn't have enough magic backing her. A stunner wouldn't work, but she had a second plan.

"Incendio!" She screamed, making the proper motion. It was strange, casting such a spell without a wand. But she managed. A small flame sparked on the hind leg of the largest wolf. It howled in pain, stumbling away from the fight. She threw it again, setting the front of the wolf on fire. It's pained howls grew louder as it rolled on the ground.

The white wolf managed to crawl its way from under the other two. It reared back, throwing itself forward and digging its teeth into the leg of an off brown wolf. He withdrew himself, and sunk his teeth into the same wolf's neck. A strangled cry escaped the wolf's throat as it went down.

The two at the base of the tree turned its focus onto its fallen pack members. The scent of blood and burning fur was heavy in the air. Ginny set one alight. It tumbled as the fur around its face set to blaze. Draco took down the other. The fifth wolf had run off sometime during the fight.

The white wolf stumbled. Mats of red started forming among Draco's fur. He stumbled.

"Draco!" She screamed down at him, worried about his state. The wolf glanced up, a wildness to his grey eyes. It snarled, taking a step towards her.

A spell collided with the shoulder of the wolf. He stumbled at the assault. Turning sharply, he just barely avoided being struck with a bright green light. He let out a dangerous snarl, stepping towards his attackers. Ginny stared in horror at the group with raised wands.

"No!" She screamed, trying to climb down from the tree. She watched the green light shot out again, almost striking Draco. He dodged between the attacks, and collided with the red head in the center of the group. The pair went out of sight among the trees.

Judging her height, Ginny took the chance and jumped. Her ankle popped when she landed roughly.

"I've got you," a voice came from her side. Strong hands helped her stand and steadied her. "I got you Gin."

"We have to help him!"

"Ron will be fine," Harry reassured her. "He's got the others."

"Not Ron," she protested, trying to break free. "Draco!"

She watched as Harry's face grew hard. "Malfoy? Is he behind this? What did he do to you?"

"Nothing," she protested. "Let me go. We need to stop them!"

A wolf's howl tore through the night sky. Shoving away from Harry, Ginny stumbled towards the group. She stared in horror at the sight. The wolf was at the center of the group. Ron, George, Fred and Seamus all had their wands trained on the wolf. Their mouths moved, finishing curses on their lips.

"Stop!" She tore forward, afraid she would be too late.

The curses on their lips stopped when the little balls of golden light appeared around them. They circled the wizards, forcing wands to be lowered. Several of the fairies lowered themselves around Draco. The wolf had completely fallen now. He was panting heavily. Red showed just as much as white did on him. His eyes screamed of pain. He closed them. The golden light settled around him.

Ginny kept running. She stumbled the rest of the way, ignoring the pain in her ankle as she placed herself between Ron and the wolf.

"I said to stop."

"Ginny." Ron's face broke with relief at the sight of her. "We've been so worried."

"She says it's Malfoy." Harry joined the group.

Ron looked between his sister and the panting white wolf. "Ginny, get away from him."

"No." She snarled. "He's on our side."

"Malfoy?" Seamus didn't sound like he believed that. "I think you've hit your head there."

"No." Ginny glared at each of them. Ron reached down to help her stand, but she shoved him back. The fairies had moved away from the group and had taken up residence around her and Draco. "I won't let you hurt him."

"He's a werewolf," Ron said.

"So it Remus."

"He's a Death Eater," George tried.

"He's not."

Fred looked at her with sympathy. "He attacked Ron. Almost bit him."

"You attacked him first." Ginny was getting tired of their opposing. She looked down at him. His face was calm, only slight traces of pain still showing. He was breathing but slower than he should be. The fairies continued sitting around them. She could hear little whispers coming from them.

She turned back to them. "He's on our side. He's been our spy. He's helped keep me alive out here."

There was a shared look of disbelief between the group. They didn't raise their wands, but they didn't look to believe her.

"We can't trust him," Ron said.

"Then trust me," Ginny asked. "Trust what I say."

The wolf gave a soft moan. The fairies fluttered up at the movement

before landing once more on him. Ginny rested her hand in his fur, worried with how much blood he had lost. "Make your decision now. But I won't leave without him.

They shared a look before nodding and put their wands away.

"Alright," George said, kneeling down beside her. "We'll take care of him. Just rest Gin."

She allowed herself to lean into his touch. Hours of exhaustion and a lack of food had left her dizzy and growing tired. She'd been pushing herself, ignoring the exhaustion. She couldn't any longer. No sooner than she leaned against George did she sigh and close her eyes.

Sleep felt nice in that moment.

When she woke next it was on a soft mattress and with a warm blanket. Groaning at a sharp pain in her back, she sat up and looked down at herself. Someone had dressed her in something other than that dirty jacket. The Chudley Cannons t-shirt was a little baggy on her, but she didn't mind. Being clean felt too good to complain.

In the bed next to her was Draco. He was bandaged up. They must have found it easier to bandage his entire torso than every individual injury he had received. His chest was rising and falling at a steady rate. He looked so peaceful.

"He woke up about three this morning." Hermione's voice came from the doorway. She was leaning against the wood, a small smile on her lips. Ron had his arm around her waist, his gaze landing untrusting on Draco's sleeping form.

"Nearly took out George's eye while he was at it," Ron added. "The bloke freaked."

"He's had a rough night," Ginny offered. "We both have."

Hermione stepped into the room, moving to check Draco's bandaged. She fussed a bit, applying some salve and readjusting the bandaged. It was short work, and once satisfied she turned to Ginny to do the same.

"I'm fine," the ginger protested, holding the hem of her shirt. She turned to Ron. "Tell this chick I'm fine."

"Just let me check the bandages," Hermione spilled her fingers under Ginny's. "I need to make sure they aren't infected. The last thing any of use wants is you dying because you caught a bug."

Ginny glared, but relented. Allowing Hermione to lift her shirt and check the wounds on her torso, he turned her attention onto her brother. "What did I miss?"

"Not much," Ron answered. "Seamus and Luna finally set a date. Getting hitched at the end of the month. Finding a church and everything. Bill and Fleur had their kid. A boy this time. We haven't been told the name yet. Neville and Harry caught some lower level Death Eaters. We've been trying to get information out of them the

last few days. We've all been worried sick about you."

Hermione reassured her she was bandaged right, and stepped back. "Let's get you something to eat. Do you feel like you can stand?"

Ginny nodded, throwing her legs off the bed. She was a little wobbly at first, but managed to correct her balance. She rested her hand on Draco's arm, relief coursing through her as he breathed in again. Turning to the others, she nodded and followed them from the infirmary.

The headquarters was as lively as she remembered. People bustled around and noise touched every inch of the place. She smiled as people clapped her on the back and welcomed her home. Her mother fussed over her in the kitchen. Her father piled enough oatmeal for three people into a bowl and was hovering over her. Harry was encouraging her to eat. At one moment she was positive he had tried to spoon feed her. Everyone kept hovering and trying to make sure she was alright. Her reassurances fell to deaf ears.

She wasn't half way through the bowl when there came a crashing sound. They all turned, poised to defend. Ginny's hand went to where she normally kept her wand only to find it still missing. There was a shout of alarm and the sound of a struggle.

Harry and Ron were the first to tear out of the room. Despite her mother's attempt to stop her, Ginny rushed behind them. The noise grew louder. Shoving the door to the infirmary opened, Ginny froze at the sight.

Draco was up. Bandaged covered his torso and ran up and down most of his arms. There were a few bandages over his cheek and neck. His hair was wild, sticking up in every angle and hitting right at his shoulders. There was alarm and danger in his grey eyes. He held a much taller guy against him, a wand pointed at his throat.

"Where am I?" Draco snarled, eyes roaming over each other them. He didn't seem to recognize faces or the fact that he was safe. His eyes were clouded over in a daze.

"Put the wand down Malfoy," Ron snarled, hand poised over the wand in his pocket. "Let Goodread go."

"We don't have to fight." Harry was much calmer in tone. He had his hands raised in a nonthreatening manner and was stepping slowly. He stopped when Draco pushed the tip of the wand deeper unto the man's throat.

"What do you want from me?" Draco didn't seem to hear them.

Arthur stepped forward, a hand raised towards the boy. The movement caused Draco to step back. A spark ran through his clouded grey eyes. That spark reminded her of the one that had been in his eyes the night of the full moon. He kept Goodread's arm pinned behind his back. Turning the wand towards Arthur, Draco glared at the man.

"Don't come near me."

There was a crowd in the doorway. It was only causing Draco to grow more anxious by the second. He was outnumbered, outmatched and still seemed to be running on survival mode. Ginny pushed her way past the others. She stood in the front of the group, her eyes trained on the haggard looking blond.

"Hey," she spoke carefully, "Draco. Look at me. That's right. It's me. Ginny. You're safe. I told you I'd get you here. I told you I wouldn't leave you. Not out there. Not like that."

Draco's eyes softened at the sound of her voice. The wand pulled away slowly.

"That's right." Ginny continued, stepping towards him slowly. Those behind her were trying to draw her back, but she kept stepping forward. "We did it. We survived. We're safe."

Draco's eyes began to lose their fog. The grey turned sharper, more alive. He shook his head as he came back to her. The dazed expression on his face calmed. Ginny smiled, reaching out a hand as he lowered the wand.

With the wand no longer against his throat, Goodread made his move. He spun himself free, twisting Draco's arm behind his back in the process. With a snarl, the man bent Draco over the bed and held him there. There was a sharp groan and a mutter of indigenious from the young blond. Goodread had managed to get ahold of his wand, and had it rammed into Draco's neck.

"Down dog," the man snarled.

Ginny growled at the action. Throwing herself forward, she knotted her hands into the man's shirt and pulled him off the young man. The anger coursing through her drove her fist into the man's jaw. He stumbled back.

Draco was already pulling himself up. Ginny took his arm, helping him so that he was turned and sitting on the mattress. One of the bandages on his torso was spotted with light red blood.

"Thanks," he muttered, not looking at her.

Ginny smiled. "No problem. You okay."

He nodded. The moment of tension in the room was broken when Molly pushed through and started inspecting the two of them for wounds. She muttered at the opened wound on Draco's torso and how sick kids never sat still like instructed. She summoned the medical kit and started working the bandages.

"That boy needs to be restrained!" Goodread screamed, holding his bleeding jaw. "He attacked me. Damn near broke my arm. He's a danger."

"He was startled," Ginny yelled back. "Probably didn't know who you were. Didn't know what was going on. He just misunderstood the situation."

"Misunderstood?" Goodread snarled. Harry and Ron were at his side, each holding him back by an arm. "So that's what you're calling this?"

That boy, that monster, just attacked me. Took my wand and almost killed me. And it's just a misunderstanding."

Ginny looked the man up and down. "You look pretty okay for a guy who was almost killed."

Goodread bared his teeth. He shock Harry and Ron off, and looked at the others in the room. "If you want to let that Death Eater sit around here, than fine. But at least put a leash on the mutt. The last thing any of us needs is another _misunderstanding_."

With that, the man shoved his way out of the room.

Ginny glared as he left, before turning her attention onto Draco. He was leaning away from Molly slightly. She kept having to pull him back as she could stop the bleeding. There was an anxiousness in his gaze, but nothing like the wildness there had been prior.

Ginny reached her hand out to take Draco's. He looked her a moment, before he squeezed her hand. He tried to smile. She tried to return the expression but there was an uncertainty to it. They lived in a world of uncertainty. But she didn't doubt this. Didn't doubt him.

The room was still, eyes on each other and the blond that no one really knew if they should trust. She'd just have to make them see. She would protect him. Draco had protected and kept her safe while they'd been in that forest. She would return the favor.

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Finally finished with this. I'm not too proud, maybe like three proud. Ya, that's a good number. Got so caught up with paper season that this just didn't have the level of creativity that I desired to have. But it's done. Almost 10,000 words and four nights of fighting with my computer and I am finished.

End
file.